

Members

Sen. Thomas Wyss, Chairperson
Sen. Charles Meeks
Sen. John Broden
Sen. Mark Blade
Rep. David Crooks
Rep. Tiny Adams
Rep. Robert Cherry
Rep. C. Michael Herndon



PUBLIC SAFETY MATTERS EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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Authority: IC 2-5-21-10

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: October 17, 2001
Meeting Time: 10 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 2

Members Present: Sen. Thomas Wyss, Chairperson; Sen. Charles Meeks; Rep. Tiny Adams; Rep. Robert Cherry; Rep. C. Michael Herndon.

Members Absent: Sen. John Broden; Sen. Mark Blade; Rep. David Crooks.

(1) Call to Order

The second meeting of the Public Safety Matters Evaluation Committee was called to order at 10:10 a.m. Senator Thomas Wyss, Chairman, introduced the members and moved on to the day's agenda.

(2) State House Security

The Chair called upon Melvin Carraway, Superintendent of the Indiana State Police (ISP), to continue a discussion of State House security begun at the last meeting.

Superintendent Carraway indicated that State House and agency staff had received training on anthrax the day before and that the ISP had undertaken an assessment of the State House campus and adjoining state buildings. He said that the vulnerabilities uncovered had been noted in the last assessment completed in 1997, and at that time costs to overcome the problems were estimated at over \$300,000. The Superintendent pointed out that there is a conflict between keeping the buildings open to the public and providing security for the staff and legislators. He indicated that security could be strengthened with identity tags, metal detectors,

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blocking off streets, and checking people in and out of the buildings. He stated that the assessment should determine the credible threats and which of these solutions should be employed. Also, in regard to the capitol police, the Superintendent said that the ISP is looking at how to revamp this unit to provide the appropriate level of manpower and training.

The Chair then opened the discussion up for questions from members. Senator Charles Meeks expressed his concern for the safety of the State House and asked about the pay level of the capitol guards. Superintendent Carraway indicated that officers are sent to training academy as incentive to attract officers, but that the turnover was high because of the pay scale. The Superintendent indicated that the ultimate responsibility for the State House was a shared responsibility with Glen Lawrence at the Department of Administration. There was then more discussion of steps that should be taken to make the facilities more secure. The Committee agreed that in light of recent tragedies and biological scares, more security is needed.

(3) State Police Disability Compensation

Continuing the discussion from the previous committee meeting, the Chair asked the Superintendent to address this issue. Mr. Carraway presented his recommendation to maintain the current system with certain changes including waiving the contribution to the pension fund for those on disability, providing for children's education, and providing a tax-free benefit. Superintendent Carraway indicated that making the system similar to PERF benefits for police and firemen may cause equity problems for newer officers and funding problems.

The Chair said that he respected the recommendation of the Superintendent, but that funding was a problem for the legislature. The Chair said that the burden is on the side of the General Assembly to address this problem in the fairest way possible. Rep. Tiny Adams confirmed with Tracy Boatwright, State Fire Marshal, that firefighters' disability benefit could be 90% of their pay and said that state police should receive a benefit equal to firemen and police.

(4) Statewide Integrated Voice & Data Communication System

At the request of the Committee, the Superintendent had prepared a presentation on the statewide 800 MHZ system which would be a joint venture between counties wishing to participate and the ISP to improve communication between law enforcement officials statewide. The presentation began with a video of a Channel 6 television news story highlighting the innovation of Johnson County in moving to a Voice and Data Communication System (800 MHZ system) for police and fire protection that had aired earlier this year (Exhibit 1).

Charles Henderson, Mayor of Greenwood, testified in favor of the state moving to this system. Joe Pitcher, attorney for Johnson County, discussed the process of his county's move to the system. He highlighted the advantages of a reliable, far-reaching system of communication for public safety officials.

The Chair agreed with the need for a unified communication system for all public safety units, especially since the events on September 11, 2001. He then asked the Committee for questions. Sen. Meeks expressed his concern with the Superintendent being the permanent chairman of the Commission, instead of a Commission member from a county. Rep. Adams asked how many counties had one communication center and was told that Delaware County was the only county with just one communication center.

Mr. Carraway introduced Keith R. Kemmerline, representing Motorola, who made a presentation on the technical aspects of the system (Exhibit 2). The system which is designed to cover 95% of a county would require towers about 350 to 400 feet tall with a construction cost of over \$350,000 per tower. The state would provide the spine and locals would join with

the equipment. The members then asked questions about using existing cell towers. These towers are shorter, and dishes would have to be hung further down. Consequently, more base units would be required according to Mr. Kemmerline and Mr. Dick Mitchell, also of Motorola. The use of satellites was discussed and discarded when it was pointed out that a direct path to the sky is necessary to use a satellite connection.

Mr. Meeks asked about volunteer fire department use of an 800 megahertz system. The Volunteer Fire Department Association was in favor of the system, although they have to maintain separate pagers because they cannot use the system.

The Chair then revisited the disability compensation issue. He allowed Steve Bushman, representing the Troopers' Association, to discuss a concurrent Pension Management Oversight Committee (PMOC) meeting, and he distributed a diagram on the State Police Disability Benefit System used in that meeting (Exhibit 3). The Chair then returned to the agenda.

(5) Update of the State Fire Marshal Program Evaluation

Tracy Boatwright, State Fire Marshal, indicated that the agency had been asked to provide information from 1996 to 2000 for the Committee audit and that, until recently, the Department had not been computerized, meaning that many staff hours would be required to compile the information. Mr. Boatwright said that the first quarter of data from the new computerization effort would be available to the Committee around Thanksgiving.

Sen. Meeks then asked about the steps being taken to neutralize the recent Anthrax threats. Mr. Boatwright said that many calls are false alarms, but that they are trying to educate the public to help keep the panic low in the community.

Rep. Adams, as a point of information, related that local members of fire and police departments often volunteer time to receive additional training. Because they have volunteered, they do not qualify for worker's compensation if they are injured during the training.

(6) Committee Recommendations

The Committee considered the following recommendations:

(1) The Committee recommends that the General Assembly study the current State Police disability compensation system and encourages the General Assembly to take action to improve the disability compensation system, especially regarding situations involving the total and permanent disability of state troopers from injuries received in the line of duty.

Upon a proper motion and second, the motion to approve the recommendation passed by a vote of 5 to 0.

(2) The Committee supports a statewide voluntary communication system.

Upon a proper motion and second, the motion to approve the recommendation passed by a vote of 5 to 0.

(3) The Committee supports the findings of the state Counter Terrorism Council on Security Issues and urges that the Council's recommendations reflect the highest priority for the safety and security of the state's employees and property.

Upon a proper motion and second, the motion to approve the recommendation passed by a vote of 5 to 0.

(4) The Committee strongly supports the Indiana State Police Department, especially its troopers and employees, in the carrying out of the Department's mission. The Committee also acknowledges and appreciates the cooperation that the State Police has provided in the study and evaluation process of the Indiana General Assembly.

Upon a proper motion and second, the motion to approve the recommendation passed by a vote of 5 to 0.

The Chair announced that the next meeting will be at the call of the Chair. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.